

skyrocketed in recent years. In fact, according to a study by Families USA, from 2000 to 2007, premiums increased by 86.6 percent.

Let me say that again. Over an 8-year period, premiums in my home State of Washington increased by 86.6 percent. But over that same period of time, wages in my State only grew by 16 percent.

Health care premiums are taking a bigger and bigger chunk out of families' paychecks. Health insurance premiums rose over five times faster than median earnings, and that problem is not going away.

For a lot of our average middle-class families who are struggling to make mortgage payments or to send their kids to college today, this is a situation that cannot continue. They can't afford it. If we don't have meaningful health care reform, it is a trend that is going to continue indefinitely.

This reform can't come a moment too soon. Two weeks ago, Patricia's—who I just talked about—insurance company, which is the largest private insurance company in my home State, announced another dramatic increase in premium. They told Patricia, and a lot of other families in my State, that starting on August 1, this company is going to raise premiums for 135,000 enrollees by an average of 17 percent more—17 percent more from what I just told you.

A front-page story in the *Seattle Times*, the day after that hike was announced, quoted Gail Petersen, who lives in north Seattle, who says that news means her premiums are going to rise by \$300. She said:

I would love to see insurance companies have a little competition.

So would Patricia Jackson. In fact, Patricia recently contacted my office again to let me know that, starting on August 1, her new premiums will be over \$1,400 a month. That is unaffordable. It is unsustainable for Patricia, for America's families, for our businesses, and for America's future economic strength.

Health care reform isn't just for the uninsured, it is for people such as Patricia and Gail and the millions of others who have health insurance right now, who have played by the rules, but whose paychecks and futures are being gouged by a system that lacks accountability, lacks competition, and lacks reason.

Unfortunately, we are hearing from some of our friends on the other side who want to prevent meaningful, comprehensive reform from ever moving forward.

Just as unfortunate are their motives. We heard a Member of our Senate say he wants to protect the status quo. He said:

If we are able to stop Obama on this, it will be his Waterloo, it will break him.

Mr. President, that type of posturing is playing games with real lives and real people in order to score cheap political points. Blocking health care re-

form won't break the President of the United States of America, but it will break American families, it will break American businesses; it will break the bank.

America deserves better. Congress knows that most Americans like their doctors, their providers, and their coverage. On the days they need to see a doctor, they are glad they can provide their families with coverage for booster shots, checkups, preventive, and even emergency care. But on payday, it is a very different story.

For those of our colleagues who ask how we can afford to pay for this, I want to tell them to ask Patricia Jackson—or any of their constituents—because the real question is: How can we afford not to? Especially at a time when the economy is struggling and the costs of care are rising, we need to do everything we can to rein in those costs, prevent people from losing their coverage and having to seek more expensive care in our emergency rooms.

Tonight we will hear from our President. He knows that doing nothing is not an option. The time is right, the time is now. Patricia, her family, and the millions of hard-working, tax-paying Americans across the country simply cannot wait any longer.

I urge our Senate colleagues to set aside the rhetoric and begin to look at the issues and help us solve this problem so we can move this forward.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. I now ask that morning business be closed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

#### DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2010—Continued

Mr. REID. Mr. President, what is the pending business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. S. 1390, the Defense Department authorization bill.

#### CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have a cloture motion at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

#### CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the

Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on Calendar No. 89, S. 1390, the National Defense Authorization for Fiscal Year 2010.

Carl Levin, Harry Reid, Barbara Boxer, Mark Udall, Jack Reed, Jon Tester, Jeanne Shaheen, Al Franken, Evan Bayh, Patrick J. Leahy, Richard J. Durbin, Byron L. Dorgan, Daniel K. Inouye, Blanche L. Lincoln, Joseph I. Lieberman, Ron Wyden, Mary L. Landrieu.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call be waived.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, this week, we are considering important legislation to authorize spending for the Department of Defense. Among the many activities supported by this funding are our efforts to fight al-Qaida, the Taliban, and other terrorist groups around the world and prevent another terrorist attack on our country.

The bill includes funding for a number of key priorities relating to our fight against terrorists. It provides \$130 billion to fund our efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq. Afghanistan remains the front line in the battle against terrorism, as it provides a haven for thousands of Taliban and al-Qaida fighters. And, as U.S. troops pull back from Iraqi cities, our mission in that country will increasingly focus on counterterrorism. It funds a number of key initiatives to enhance the safety of our troops and our citizens from terrorist threats, including funding for detecting and defeating improvised explosive devices, or IEDs. It funds some of our most important efforts to prevent unsecured nuclear material from falling into the hands of terrorists. It expands the size of our Special Operations Forces—the elite commando units like Navy SEALs and Army Green Berets—who lead this Nation's global ground fight against terrorism.

While the Special Operations Forces provide us a unique and unsurpassed capability, they are hardly the only group of Americans on the front lines of this fight. The Special Operations Forces are part of one of three key groups of people in our government who play a critical role in this fight. Military service members, who are fighting house-to-house, street-to-street, and village to village in Iraq and Afghanistan to identify and eliminate terrorists and insurgents. Members of the Foreign Service and USAID who, in addition to carrying out our Nation's diplomacy, are working with local leaders to build governing capacity, improve essential services, and foster economic growth. And members of our Nation's intelligence agencies, who provide the vital information we need both to keep these other public servants out of harm's way and to take the fight to the terrorists.

I want to pause for a moment to recognize and commend their tremendous service to our Nation. The courage, endurance, and sacrifice they exhibit on a